



# U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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## *In Brief*

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## **Highlights of the GAO Report “Improved Agency Coordination Needed for Social Security Card Enhancement Efforts”**

### **Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report Highlights**

- ❖ The Social Security card and number are easily counterfeited. In one case, Social Security Administration (SSA) investigators apprehended an individual who used counterfeit immigration documents to obtain over 600 valid Social Security numbers to sell to undocumented immigrants at a price of \$1,000 to \$2,000.
- ❖ GAO states that the Social Security card is a weak link in DHS’s employment verification process. Beyond the easy ability to counterfeit cards, millions of existing cardholders have not proven their employment eligibility status to SSA.
- ❖ GAO notes that improvements to state drivers’ licenses and identification cards, as a result of the Real ID Act, may help the government’s ability to identify individuals and establish better links to the Social Security card and employment eligibility determinations. Before issuing drivers’ licenses and identification cards, states will be required to verify the Social Security numbers and legal presence of applicants.
- ❖ SSA could add features to the paper card that improve its’ counterfeit resistance—including hidden images that appear when the card is tilted, changing the paper content of the card to include fiber that reacts to certain chemicals, and other features currently used in currency.

### **SSA Implementation of the Intelligence Act**

- ❖ In accordance with the Intelligence Reform Act, SSA has limited the number of replacement cards from 52 cards annually to 3 annually, and 10 over a lifetime.

- ❖ SSA established new standards for verifying documents with third parties before issuing Social Security cards and numbers.
- ❖ Prior GAO work showed that SSA did not have sufficient controls in place to minimize fraudulent activities that could affect SSA's Enumeration at Birth data—used to issue SSNs and cards. As a result of the Intelligence Reform Act, SSA has established a more detailed check to ensure that two different SSNs are not assigned to the same child.
- ❖ As required by the Act, SSA now adds death indicators as “alerts” to warn that certain accounts belong to deceased persons. SSA reported that it currently maintains death information in its records and added state death information to its verifications. SSA is working on adding fraud indicators to its records so that inquirers are alerted to SSNs involved in fraudulent activities.
- ❖ While the Intelligence Reform Act required SSA to consult with DHS in convening a task force that provides for establishing safeguards to the card, SSA took over 1 year to convene the task force. This has limited the task force to less than 6 months to complete its work.

The entire GAO Report can be viewed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06303.pdf>.

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